

Message Text

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TAGS: OVIP (KISSINGER, HENRY A.)

SUBJECT: AP STORY

FOLLOWING STORY MOVED ON ASSOCIATED PRESS WIRE AT 0920

EST AS AP-015 AND AP-016:

CHINA

BY FRED S. HOFFMAN

WASHINGTON--A MILITARY-CIVILIAN POWER STRUGGLE APPEARS TO BE GROWING BEHIND COMMUNIST CHINA'S PLACID FACADE, US INTELLIGENCE SOURCES SAID HERE. INDICATIONS OF INCREASING POLITICAL TENSION IN CHINA HAVE THREADED THROUGH REPORTS REACHING HERE OVER THE PAST SEVERAL MONTHS. MUCH OF THIS IS BELIEVED TO STEM FROM THE MANEUVERING OF OPPOSING FACTIONS FOR DOMINANCE IN THE EVENT OF MAO TSE-TUNG'S DEATH. MAO, THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY CHAIRMAN, IS NEARLY 80. AMONG ITS MORE RECENT MOVES, THE RADICAL WING OF THE PARTY REPORTEDLY HAS BEEN WORKING TO ERODE THE POLITICAL STRENGTH OF THE ARMY, WHICH CONTROLS MANY OF THE KEY POSTS IN CHINA'S PROVINCES. AS A COUNTERWEIGHT TO THE ARMY, RADICAL LEADERS IN PEKING AND SHANGHAI HAVE BEEN PUSHING FOR A MAJOR EXPANSION OF THE CIVILIAN MILITARY IN CHINA'S

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CITIES, US SOURCES SAID.

PROFESSIONAL MILITARY OFFICERS ARE REPORTEDLY RESISTING ANY MAJOR STRENGTHENING OF THE URBAN MILITIA, WHICH COULD BE A POWERFUL WEAPON FOR THE RADICAL PARTY ELEMENT IN A DUEL FOR CONTROL. BUT THE OFFICERS MAY BE IN A LOSING FIGHT BECAUSE THE RADICALS ARE SAID TO BE BACKED BY MAO AND LED BY MAO'S WIFE, CHIANG CHING, AMONG OTHERS.

BY TRADITION, THE PEOPLES LIBERATION ARMY (PLA) WAS KEPT OUT OF COMMUNIST CHINA'S DOMESTIC POLITICS UNTIL THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION OF 1966. THE PARTY ALWAYS BELIEVED THAT CIVILIANS SHOULD "RULE THE GUN." HOWEVER, THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION, FOSTERED BY MAO TO PURGE REVISIONIST ELEMENTS, SPAWNED SUCH CHAOS THAT THE PLA WAS CALLED ON TO RESTORE ORDER AND ITS OFFICERS BECAME DOMINANT IN MOST PROVINCIAL COMMITTEES.

ALTHOUGH THE PLA'S POLITICAL POSITION HAS SLIPPED IN THE PAST FEW YEARS, IT REMAINS STRONG. THE RADICALS, WHO OPPOSE RAPID LIBERALIZATION IN CHINESE POLITICS AND SOCIETY, ARE SAID TO BE TAKING AIM AT PREMIER CHOU EN-LAI, A PRAGMATIST AND A MODERATE DESCRIBED AS FAVORING FASTER CHANGE EVEN IF IT DEPARTS FROM ORTHODOXY. SO FAR, THERE HAVE BEEN NO OPEN MOVES AGAINST CHOU. BUT REPORTS SPEAK OF UNDER-THE-SURFACE ATTACKS, INCLUDING A CAMPAIGN OF CRITICISM OF CONFUSCIANISM THAT US ANALYSTS INTERPRET AS A ROUND THRUST AT CHOU.

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